Annals of Tourism Research 50 (2015) 98–112

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Annals of Tourism Research

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/atoures

Limits to mass tourism's effects in rural peripheries

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Received 3 October 2013
Revised 14 November 2014
Accepted 17 November 2014
Available online 9 December 2014

Coordinating Editor: Sanjay Nepal

Keywords:
Tourism
Rural
Periphery
Livelihoods
Mobility
Cambodia

ABSTRACT

Economic linkages between mass tourism cores and rural peripheries are widely proposed as developmental. This article adopts a livelihoods approach to investigate the influence of a major Cambodian tourism destination on its rural hinterland. A quantitative pre-study of three rural villages indicated that links were mainly indirect, through labour migration. The qualitative main phase found villagers adapting skills and social networks to a range of employments in diverse locations. Poor households in the rural periphery were thus already connected to wider economies with tourism playing a distinctive low-risk, low-return role in their livelihood strategies. Policy on poverty and tourism should be informed by an understanding of rural households' existing livelihood portfolios and the strategic contingent decisions which shape them.

Introduction

This article contributes to understanding the relationships between tourism booms and impoverished rural peripheries by conducting livelihoods research in three villages in the rural periphery of a major tourist destination. A policy-oriented mainstream in literature on tourism and development has, in step with changing ideas in development theory (Scheyvens, 2011), seen increasing flows of tourists into poor countries as a potential driver of development (Brown & Hall, 2008). The assumption of pro-poor tourism and its antecedents is that strengthening links to the local economy can increase

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http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2014.11.011
0160-7383/

the proportion of tourist spending that goes to the poor and can therefore reduce poverty (Ashley, Roe, & Goodwin, 2001; Cater, 1987; de Kadt, 1979; Mitchell & Ashley, 2010).

Critical scholars with a political economy orientation, often influenced by metropolis satellite theory (see Chaperon & Bramwell, 2013, pp. 132–135; Lacher & Nepal, 2010a, pp. 947–953), have suggested that tourism strengthens relations of dependency between peripheries and cores both within and between nations (Britton, 1982; Brohman, 1996; Mbaiwa, 2005). Notwithstanding this theoretical stance, however, they tend to recommend reform and regulation of tourism rather than self-reliance (Britton, 1982, p. 355; Brohman, 1996, pp. 66–67), even if Mbaiwa's solution involves promoting domestic tourism alongside international tourism (Mbaiwa, 2005, pp. 169–170). There is in other words a surprisingly broad consensus amongst tourism scholars that tourism cores should be better linked to rural peripheries.

While engaging mass tourism has been seen as the key challenge for pro-poor tourism policy (Goodwin, 2009; Scheyvens, 2007, p. 251), most reported success has been achieved with smaller-scale community-based initiatives (Zapata, Hall, Lindo, & Vanderschaeghe, 2011). In the case of such smaller-scale initiatives, substantial academic attention has been paid to the context. A livelihood approach, which means studying how households strategically deploy their assets and capacities in order to satisfy current and future needs (Scoones, 1998), has shed light on the extent to which additional incomes from tourism may or may not be compatible with current and intended ways of making a living (e.g. Fabinyi, 2010; Mbaiwa & Sakuze, 2009; Mbaiwa & Stronza, 2010; Simpson, 2009; Tao & Wall, 2009). The same attention to existing livelihoods has not been applied in the rural peripheries of mass tourism destinations. This article addresses that gap by reporting on livelihoods research in three rural villages in Siem Reap province, Cambodia.

During the past two decades, the number of visitors to Cambodia, attracted by the ancient temples of Angkor, has expanded by an order of 30, from 118 183 visitors in 1993 to 3 584 307 in 2012 (Royal Government of Cambodia, 2014). Tourism at Angkor has been a major driver of national development and has transformed the provincial town of Siem Reap. Meanwhile, however, the rural province of Siem Reap, where the temples are located, has remained one of the poorest provinces in an already poor country. This article describes the livelihoods of villagers in three villages in rural Siem Reap and explains how, and to what extent, the tourism boom centred on the provincial town and the temple complex has reoriented those livelihoods.

The remainder of this introduction describes the theoretical approach by elaborating further firstly on the relationship between livelihoods, mobility and tourism, and secondly on the relationship between tourism and core-periphery dynamics.

Livelihoods, mobility and tourism

Originating in the 1980s, the livelihoods approach in development studies suggested that experts (both researchers and practitioners) need to step outside the assumptions and rationalities of policy, avoid the biases and misunderstandings generated by short field visits, and to invest more systematically in understanding situations from the viewpoint of people who are imagined as beneficiaries (Chambers, 1983; Scoones, 2009). Implicit in the approach, therefore, is that it does not begin from a particular sectorial view, but rather places different sectors in the context of people's overall circumstances and intentions. In the livelihoods literature, household assets are commonly conceptualised as a pentagon of five kinds of 'capital': natural, physical, social, financial, human (Scoones, 1998).

With respect to tourism and rural peripheries in the global South, the livelihoods approach has largely been used to study the effects of community-based initiatives, especially eco-tourism and wildlife tourism, setting people's tourism-related activities in the context of a portfolio of livelihood activities. It is thereby possible to identify synergies or opportunity costs (e.g. Mbaiwa & Sakuze, 2009; Mbaiwa & Stronza, 2010; Simpson, 2009; Tao & Wall, 2009).

A major theme in livelihoods research in the global South has been de-agrarianisation or "the new rurality". While both national statistics and local cultural identities suggest that agriculture is dominant, livelihoods research has depicted rural households as less agriculture-dependent (Rigg, 2006) and characterised by "widespread occupational experimentation" (Bryceson, 2002, p. 725). The tourism literature, meanwhile, has tended to be somewhat bifocal, seeing declining rural agriculture

(or fisheries) and seeking to evaluate tourism as the single alternative to this decline (Carte, McWatters, Daley, & Torres, 2010; Fabinyi, 2010; Gascón, 2014). The juxtaposition of the two literatures suggests that tourism scholarship should perhaps be more open to the possibility that tourism incomes are only one part of a broader process of rural income diversification.

Alongside a diversification of income sources (which may be generated at home), livelihoods scholarship is also finding rural livelihoods to be increasingly multi-local. Managing a contemporary rural household is less likely to be a question of farming a plot of land and accessing local natural resources; it is more likely to include identifying opportunities in distant places and getting access to the transport and communication required to exploit those opportunities (Rigg, 2013; Silvey & Elmhirst, 2003). This empirical insight aligns with thinking about place in human geography in recent decades. Places are no longer understood as containing the resources upon which populations depend, or even as the locations where most of life is experienced. They are instead understood as sites of flow, as having porous boundaries and as being characterised by fluidity (c.f. Castree, 2009; Massey, 1994; Pred, 1984).

This understanding of the rural poor as mobile and networked implies a different emphasis to that sometimes found in tourism studies. Tourism literature tends to conceive of mobility as integral to, or a consequence of, tourism. Tourism mobilities have been defined as "all those mobilities that are generated by the actions of tourists" (Xin, Tribe, & Chambers, 2013, p. 82). There have been calls to focus on tourism *as* mobility (Hall, 2005), and on mobility as a theoretical perspective to be further pursued in tourism studies (Cohen & Cohen, 2012, pp. 2180–2183). These perspectives on the internal dynamics of tourism may also be usefully applied to the contexts that tourism affects, even those that are remote and rural.

Mass tourism and the rural periphery

There are multiple ways in which a booming tourism centre might generate improvements in the conditions of people living in the periphery. Pro-poor tourism impacts have been conceived of as threefold. Firstly, there are *direct* effects – poor people earn as workers or sellers within the tourism sector. Secondly, there are *indirect* effects – earnings generated by tourism in non-tourism sectors, including multiplier effects from tourism workers spending earnings in the local economy. And thirdly, there are *dynamic*, long-term effects on such things as institutions, infrastructure and management of the natural environment (Mitchell & Ashley, 2010).

For most poor people living in the rural periphery, these links necessarily operate over distance. People may have to migrate to the core to labour or do business. Or they may produce goods in the periphery which are then transported for sale in the core. However, tourism capital also seeks diversification beyond the core (Gibson, 2009, p. 529), meaning that a rural periphery will likely play host to some smaller scale activities and destinations, though these will likely be a minority. In this study, one of the three case study villages selected contains a secondary tourist attraction which tourists visit on the way to the temples. The literature clearly indicates that opening up an interface with tourists does not guarantee economic benefits, and certainly not broad-based ones (Gascón, 2014; Hall, 2007; Lacher & Nepal, 2010b; Sharpley, 2002; Walpole & Goodwin, 2000). However, the presence of tourists in one of these peripheral villages will provide the basis to make comparisons between a peripheral site that hosts a secondary tourist attraction and peripheral sites which do not directly encounter tourists.

This study therefore provides a portrayal of livelihoods in three rural villages in a province where a mass tourism destination is the major economic activity but where, at least in the first two decades of rapid expansion, this has not engendered widespread rural development. The questions to be answered are: (i) How do the households in the study villages earn their livings? (ii) What role does tourism play both in current livelihoods and future plans? (iii) How have contextual factors shaped livelihood strategies and enabled or constrained tourism's influence?

Livelihoods and mobilities in rural Siem Reap

Cambodia's turbulent modern history, tourism's role in national economic recovery and the effects of Angkor tourism-related development on the region are crucial to the context of this study.

Cambodia's late twentieth century history of genocide and war is gradually being superseded by political stabilisation and rapid if fragile economic recovery (Chandler, 1993; Heder, 2005; Hughes & Un, 2011). Superpower realignments following the fall of the Berlin wall enabled internationally-sponsored elections and a formal transition to market-oriented democracy in 1993. This was followed by a gradual consolidation of peace by 1998. Since then, economic growth has been steady, poverty has diminished and the country has gradually ascended in the Human Development index to the extent that it is now ranked as having medium rather than low human development. Census data continue to suggest that 85% of the population live in the countryside, and classify 70% of the population as having farming as their main source of income. However, scholars in Cambodia have been documenting a rise in mobile, multi-local livelihoods (e.g. Biddulph, 2011; Brickell, 2011; Derks, 2005) and this suggests that a breakdown of the rural as a distinct sphere is taking place, as it is elsewhere in Southeast Asia (Rigg, 2001) and beyond (Rigg, 2006).

Tourism has played a significant role in the national recovery. By 2011 tourism's direct contribution to GDP was 9.5%, and its total contribution 22.1%, higher than in any other country in Southeast Asia (WTTC., 2012, p. 8). Tourism has therefore been described as Cambodia's 'second engine of economic growth' after the garment industry (Royal Government of Cambodia, 2006, p. 17). Pro-poor tourism was promoted as a key government policy to achieve sustained growth and poverty reduction (Royal Government of Cambodia, 2002, pp. 75–77; 2006), although the recently adopted national tourism strategy (2012–2020) prioritises increased tourist numbers and does not include specific poverty reduction provisions (Royal Government of Cambodia, 2012). Internationally, meanwhile, Cambodia is noted as a country where relatively little of tourists' spending finds its way into the hands of the poor (Dwyer & Thomas, 2011; Mitchell & Ashley, 2010).

The focus of the tourism boom in Cambodia is the Angkor temple complex located in Siem Reap province in the north-west of the country. Constructed between the 9th and 13th Centuries and recognised as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1992 (Wager, 1995), Angkor has developed rapidly as a tourist destination. The tourism boom at Angkor transformed the provincial town of Siem Reap. In the early 1990s it had the feel of a rural village. Now it has paved roads, air-conditioned hotels, traffic jams and a continuing land and construction boom (the author first visited Siem Reap in 1992 was resident there 1994–5 and has returned most years since). Tourism dominates the economy of the town with over 50% of jobs being tourism-related (Chheang, 2010). The rural surroundings have not, however, been transformed; Winter writes that tourism has made the town of Siem Reap into "an enclave of imbalanced wealth and development, and a micro-economy beyond which lies sustained rural poverty" (Winter, 2008, p. 537).

A small body of research has examined the impacts of tourism on villages within a 20 kilometre radius of the provincial town (Ballard, 2005; Brickell, 2008; Brickell, 2011; Chheang, 2010; Vutha & Sokphally, 2007). This constitutes an area which, if not quite peri-urban, is distinguished by the fact that people can commute daily by bicycle into the town (Vutha & Sokphally, 2007, p. 51). Overall this research suggests that in these near-lying areas tourism has had a limited effect on agriculture, that many household livelihood strategies are being reoriented away from agriculture to non-agricultural activities and that low-wage opportunities in tourism are increasing. However, they also show that it may be difficult for any given household to access opportunities and poorer households in particular struggle to take advantage of either business opportunities or better paid jobs, not least because of competition from in-migrants from other provinces.

Brickell's work differs from the others in terms of its scale and its attention to mobility. While the others are principally village studies, she focuses on dynamics within households, including the gendered implications of tourism's effects. She described livelihoods as translocal (deliberately contrasted with the concept of transnational in migration studies) and characterised localities as "specific situated places of connectivity that enable, rather than curtail, mobility within and beyond the nation" (Brickell, 2011, p. 35). This captures the conception of place employed at the scale of the village in this article.

Study method: applying a livelihood approach in rural Siem Reap

In order to move beyond the peri-urban fringe of Siem Reap, three villages were selected that were sufficiently remote from the provincial capital (35–50 kilometres by road) that they were not within

daily reach of the city by bicycle (although there was one heroic exception to this). While distinctly rural these villages are not excessively remote in provincial terms (see Fig. 1). Within this rural periphery, villages were chosen such that comparisons could be drawn between villages near the temples (Khnar, Doun On) and villages remote from the temples (Champey), and, most significantly, between villages with tourist visitors (Khnar) and those without (Champey, Doun On) (see Table 1).

Informed by the livelihoods literature and long experience of conducting research in rural villages in Cambodia, a two-phase research strategy was employed. Firstly, a quantitative survey provided basic descriptive statistics on current household livelihood portfolios. Secondly, a qualitative main phase provided an understanding of the contextual factors and decision-making processes which shaped household livelihood strategies.

The quantitative survey data were collected during weeklong stays in the villages in early 2012. This enabled observation and formal and informal interaction between researcher and villagers. Hence quantitative data collection also served to generate a degree of familiarity and rapport in preparation for the main research phase, which was qualitative.

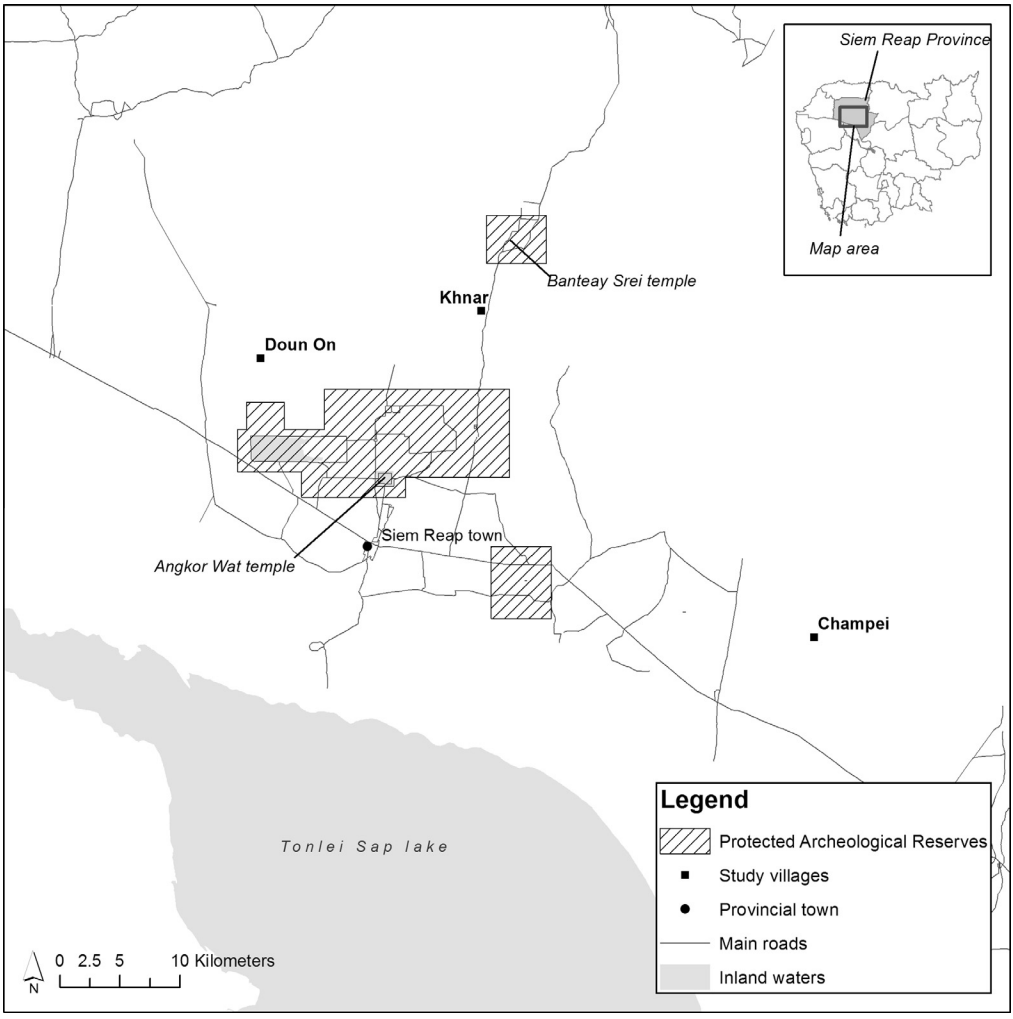

Fig. 1. Location of Case Study Villages.

Table 1
Villages and interviewees.

Village	Description	# Households	# Survey responses	# Follow-up interviews
Khnar	Near temples, tourists visit daily	199	179 (89.9%)	27 (13.6%/15.1%)
Doun On	Near temples, no tourists	232	187 (80.6%)	21 (9.0%/11.2%)
Champey	Far from temples, no tourists	103	89 (86.4%)	18 (17.4%/20.2%)
Total		534	452 (84.6%)	56 (10.5%/12.4%)

A survey was administered to every household in the villages with response rates between eighty and ninety percent (see Table 1). The survey comprised firstly individual data which served as a village census yielding information on age, sex, birthplace, current location, and main livelihood activities at the time of the survey, and secondly household data which yielded information on livelihood activities throughout a 12-month period, strategies in times of crisis (such as an expensive illness in the family) and aspirations for future generations. Individual data, not requiring memory, was more reliable, but seasonally biased. Household data was less reliable because it required villagers to recall activities over a year, but it was also less seasonally biased. Questions on monetary income were avoided since this kind of information cannot be reliably collected in rural Cambodian villages without highly intensive methods.

Qualitative interviews were conducted in Khmer language during weeklong stays in late 2012 when 3–4 in-depth interviews per day were conducted. The first 8–10 interviews were conducted with households in different areas of the village whose livelihood activities corresponded to the main portfolios identified for that village by the quantitative survey. Selection of subsequent informants was to pursue particular issues or knowledge gaps identified in the earlier interviews. Members of 56 households across the three villages were interviewed (Table 1). Interviews covered family history, current livelihoods, the specific circumstances and choices leading to those livelihoods, and future plans and aspirations. Questions about the role of tourism in household livelihoods were asked last, thereby setting them in the context of villagers' overall strategies. The author conducted the quantitative research with two research assistants and three villagers. The 56 qualitative interviews comprised 35 by the author who interviewed in Khmer and took notes in English, and 21 by a research assistant who took notes in Khmer which the author translated into English. Audio-recordings of 29 of the 56 interviews are held by the author.

Results of quantitative pre-study

The quantitative survey gave an initial overview, which was most reliable where it did not involve any reliance on memory or on data requiring economic analysis. Questions about location of all household members therefore provided the most trustworthy data. When surveyed, 65.7% of adult villagers were at home, or in the village area, 10.6% were in the provincial town where the tourism economy is focused whilst only 3.3% were abroad in Thailand (see Table 2). Given the dominance of tourism in the Siem Reap town economy, even jobs that are not directly in the tourism industry can be assumed to indirectly benefit from it.

Of the adults in Siem Reap at the time of our survey, 18 out of 117 (15.3%) were directly employed in the tourism industry. Some common activities, particularly washing cars and stone carving were only engaged in by villagers from one village (see Table 3).

When households were asked about their main sources of income for the previous year, agriculture was the dominant activity in all villages. Other important activities were geographically focused, notably weaving and sugar palm production in Doun On, firewood and charcoal production in Khnar and to a lesser degree (given its smaller population) agricultural labouring in Champey (see Table 4). These patterns appeared to suggest potential supply chains into the tourism market.

A key element of livelihoods research relates to people's longer term ambitions. Despite living in the province with Cambodia's main tourist attraction, villagers overwhelmingly aspired for their children to get government jobs (86 specified teaching and 43 specified nursing). Less than 5% mentioned direct tourism employment (see Table 5).

Table 2
Location of Adult village members (source: Survey data collected Feb-Mar 2012).

	Champey	Doun On	Khnar	Total
At home	85 (36.6%)	177 (46.3%)	192 (39.3%)	454 (41.2%)
In village area	73 (31.5%)	53 (13.9%)	144 (29.4%)	270 (24.5%)
Within district	27 (11.6%)	57 (15.0%)	75 (15.3%)	159 (14.4%)
Siem Reap town	11 (4.7%)	65 (17.0%)	41 (8.4%)	117 (10.6%)
Another province	12 (5.2%)	18 (4.7%)	28 (5.8%)	58 (5.2%)
Thailand	22 (9.5%)	10 (2.6%)	4 (0.8%)	36 (3.3%)
No reply/missing	2 (0.9%)	2 (0.5%)	5 (1.0%)	9 (0.8%)
	232 (100.0%)	382 (100.0%)	489 (100.0%)	1103 (100.0%)

Table 3
Main activity of adults in Siem Reap.

Response *Direct tourism employment*	Champey	Doun On	Khnar	Total
Washing cars	0	15	0	15
Construction labour	1	4	5	10
Stone carving (souvenirs)	*0*	*6*	*0*	*6*
Hotel work	*0*	*3*	*3*	*6*
Domestic labour	1	4	0	5
Restaurant work	*0*	*4*	*1*	*5*
Tour Guide	*0*	*0*	*1*	*1*
Other	9	29	31	69
Total	11	65	41	117
Direct tourism sub-total	*0*	*13*	*5*	*18*

This statistical summary provides the background to what follows, namely the results of qualitative enquiries which sought to set these quantitative findings in the context of the changes that have occurred in the two villages over the past two decades (1993–2012). The qualitative results are presented in three parts. Part one examines livelihoods in the village area; part two, livelihood activities outside the village; and part three the specific livelihood impacts of tourists visiting Khnar village.

Livelihoods in the local landscape

The same changes that initiated the tourism boom – peace, followed by liberal democracy and the opening of markets – also initiated changes in the rural landscape. Much of lowland Cambodia enjoyed peace and security from 1979, but for the villagers of Siem Reap, the threats of raids by guerrilla insurgents, the uneven presence of government troops and the unpredictable use of landmines by both sides meant that the 1980s and much of the 1990s were a time of danger and poverty.

Insecurity meant that mobility and economic activity were severely curtailed. Villagers were, for example, forbidden from carrying food to the fields for fear that they might be feeding the Khmer Rouge. All three villages were affected: the Doun On village chief had his house burned down, and slept in different locations each night to avoid being captured and killed; villagers in Khnar recalled gunfights between government and Khmer Rouge soldiers in the village area; in Champey, a woman recalled how just months before local Khmer Rouge units defected in 1994 they came to the village and killed her husband because, they said, he had a Vietnamese heart inside his Cambodian body.

When peace came, the initial driver of rural transformation was timber. Both locals and outsiders set up sawmills in all three villages to cut the newly accessible forests. Once the most valuable timber was gone, the labourers and small logging entrepreneurs moved out again, leaving villagers to begin informally claiming the degraded forest land which at that time had little market value. Many households that during the 1980s and 1990s only had a hectare or so of rice land now claimed 5–10 hectares of partially cleared forest. Without mechanical equipment, and with daily food needs limiting labour

Table 4
Main reported source of income for the household over the past twelve months.

Response	Champey	Doun On	Khnar	Total
Farming	68	96	95	229
Weaving	0	24	1	0
Retailing	1	8	15	24
Firewood/charcoal	0	0	22	22
Construction	4	8	9	21
Agricultural labour	9	3	6	18
Sugar palm production	0	10	0	10
Hotel & Restaurant work	0	0	3	3
Other	7	38	26	71
Total	89	187	179	455

Table 5
Respondents' aspirations for children's generation.

Response	Frequency	%
Government work – civilian	229	50.3
Farming	45	9.9
Government work – police/military	16	3.5
Tour guide	11	2.4
Tourism – hotel/restaurant	8	1.8
Other	74	16.3
Don't know	72	15.8
Total	455	100.0

availability, converting forestland to agricultural use was a slow process and the fields never became particularly productive.

A spike in land prices in the late 2000s saw buyers from the national capital Phnom Penh and from Siem Reap town looking to purchase land in the countryside. In each village land acquired in the late 1990s was sold to outsiders in the late 2000s, though with slightly different circumstances in each village. In Champey, after land prices fell, speculators sublet land to plantation farmers from eastern Cambodia who provided some seasonal labour opportunities for villagers. In Doun On a mysterious company acquired a large area of land using local authorities as mediators, but has not yet occupied the land and continues to allow villagers to farm it. In Khnar, the village on the road to the temples, outsiders not only bought agricultural land but also residential land in the heart of the village. These buyers included foreigners and Cambodians returning from overseas, thus constituting a form of international connectedness unlike anything in the other two villages.

Both the local timber booms in the late 1990s and the land boom in the late 2000s generated infusions of financial capital into village households, often amounting to several thousand US dollars. These were mainly used to improve housing, but also to purchase motorcycles, hand tractors, televisions and mobile phones. Generally, while appreciating the lifestyle improvements, villagers expressed regret and frustration at not knowing how to use this capital to generate stable, regular incomes.

These changes provide some of the context for the livelihood activities reported by villagers. In all of the villages over half of the respondents reported their own farming as their main source of income (Table 4). However, our qualitative interviews revealed that few households had a regular surplus of rice, that only a handful of households raised livestock commercially and that fruit and vegetable production was only for household consumption, with rare surpluses being traded inside the village. The high value villagers' ascribed to agricultural income seemed to relate as much to a cultural identity as to economic benefits. Meanwhile, poor soils and a lack of irrigation to enable reliable water supply meant that there seemed little prospect of these villages producing significant surpluses and thereby linking to supply chains into the Siem Reap tourist economy.

Other important sources of income related to the exploitation of natural resources locally, such as basket weaving and sugar palm production in Doun On and fire wood and charcoal production in Khnar (Table 4). However, with the successive waves of logging and land sales the local natural resources on which these activities depended were either utterly depleted (Champey) or severely degraded (Doun On and Khnar). Villagers described having to travel further to collect firewood for sugar palm production in Doun On and charcoal production in Khnar, and described their incomes from these activities as declining and likely to disappear.

Basket weaving in Doun On was an interesting case in this respect. This was a traditional activity, apparently local and suitable for tourist-oriented production. However, interviews revealed a convoluted supply chain. The reeds used for weaving are no longer available locally so villagers travel overnight on trucks to collect them in a neighbouring province. Demand for baskets has increased, with some older women having only recently learned weaving from neighbours to respond to this demand. However, this demand came not from tourism, but from traders in Siem Reap who export to Thailand. It is possible that villagers' skills and experience give them some comparative advantages to potentially reorient production to a tourist market, however the supply chain does not begin in the local area, the product is not currently suitable for tourists (too rough and bulky) and the villagers' established contacts link them to a different market.

Overall, with the natural resource base dwindling, the traditional skills, or human capital, of the villagers are becoming obsolete. In order to adapt to the continuing depletion of local natural resources they have increasingly resorted to labour migration and multi-local livelihoods.

Livelihood activities beyond the village

Increased mobility was experienced both as an imperative and as an opportunity. One old lady, suffering impaired vision and partial paralysis, explained it as the defining characteristic of contemporary village life. She contended that anybody could go anywhere, and that anybody who wanted paid work could find it. The only exceptions, she noted wryly, were those who were too old or sick to take advantage of such opportunities.

The February 2012 survey found 34% of villagers active away from the village area (Table 2). This compares with 38% in a study of another lowland rice village in southern Cambodia which used similar methods (Biddulph, 2010). There was, however, a stark contrast between the 2010 study and the Siem Reap study regarding the extent to which a single urban core dominated. In the 2010 study 84% of those away from the village were in the national capital Phnom Penh. By contrast, of villagers working away from home in the Siem Reap study villages, 43% were working in their home districts and returning home at night; 32% were in Siem Reap provincial town (including 18 of this 117 employed directly in tourism); 16% were in other provinces of Cambodia and 10% were in Thailand. In other words, despite the visible wealth of the tourism boom in Siem Reap and the relative poverty of the countryside, the town is not dominant when viewed in the context of the choices available to households.

Even more pronounced than the geographical distribution was the diverse range of livelihood activities. The 117 labour migrants in Siem Reap town were engaged in 34 different income-generating activities. There was only one activity (car washing with 15 people) employing more than ten people, and only five activities employing more than five people (the other four being hotel work, stone carving, construction, fishing).

The qualitative research uncovered the stories which explained some of the village specific path dependencies in relation to employment. Almost all people who had worked in Siem Reap reported getting their jobs via recommendations from friends or relatives, often replacing the person who recommended them. In Doun On, villagers working in car washes (there were none from the other villages) was traced back to one man who established a car wash business in town 15 years previously. As the trade expanded from three to over 20 businesses in Siem Reap, so did the network of contacts of Doun On villagers in that trade. Less visible in the survey findings, but similarly important from the viewpoint of securing work on decent terms, was a construction foreman from Champey to whom villagers turned when looking for building jobs.

Migration to Thailand emerged as a more significant issue in our discussions with villages than appeared from the fact that just 3% of adults were there working in February 2012 (Table 2). For the past two decades labour migration to Thailand has been a high risk, high reward option for villagers in north-west Cambodia. Migrants rely on smugglers to take them across the border and are vulnerable to various forms of trickery and violence at the hands of smugglers, employers and police. Villagers reported earning 200–300 USD per month as unskilled, illegal workers on the fringes of the Thai economy, but only 50 to 100 USD per month as unskilled workers in Siem Reap town. For this reason, acquiring work in Thailand dominated strategic thinking for many of the interviewees.

Government policies to enable legal labour migration are modifying the risk-reward calculation, but only partly. Many villagers had applied for passports and were hoping to be less vulnerable to exploitation and violence. However, they remained dependent on intermediaries, to whom villagers paid approximately 250 US dollars in advance for a passport, transportation to Thailand and placement in a job. People encountered in all three villages were waiting uncertainly for their passports.

The option of lower wages, but comparatively lower risk in Siem Reap, as against higher wages, but higher risks in Thailand was beginning to lead to an identifiable pattern in household livelihood strategies. Young, unmarried adults were travelling to Siem Reap to work as a first job. As they got older, and especially after marriage, they sought to work in Thailand for three or four years to earn money to build a house and start a family.

During the past two decades, the hardship and risks of migration have been alleviated by the emergence in villagers' lives of information technology. All but the poorest households had at least one mobile phone and everybody had access to one. People use phones to send money home from Thailand via "banks" (actually private individuals at district towns who charge considerably less commission than the official banks), meaning they can send a regular income back to their relatives, and do not have to worry about carrying gold or cash across the border. One daughter sent home 360 USD per month. Of this, 60 USD went to support the household, whilst the remaining 300 USD per month was saved for building a house for her. The telephones also reduce anxiety. One mother whose teenage son had just started a hotel security job in Siem Reap, reported calling him every night.

Whilst the transformation of the local landscape had not enabled villagers to secure improved incomes, labour migration over the past twenty years certainly has. With Siem Reap the destination for half of the labour migration, tourism has been a significant creator of opportunities, although these have mostly been low-wage work outside the tourism industry in activities such as construction. If villagers succeed in their ambitions to secure more work in Thailand, then tourism's role in providing direct and indirect labour opportunities may actually decrease.

Meanwhile, household life cycles and strategies mediate the role of tourism and other activities in individual trajectories. Calculations are made based on the relatively meagre incomes available in Siem Reap and the still considerable risks and hardships of working in Thailand. Poverty is not only experienced in terms of constrained incomes, but multiple forms of fear and emotional hardship. The presence of opportunities in Siem Reap means that households have a low-risk, low-return option. This can be a complement to opportunities in Thailand, but wages in Siem Reap would need to increase by a factor of two or three before they became a competitor to opportunities in Thailand.

Tourists through the village: ironies of proximity and distance

As noted in the introduction, a thriving tourist destination potentially generates direct and indirect links over distance to people in the periphery. However, selected parts of the periphery can also benefit by becoming secondary tourist destinations. This is already occurring elsewhere in Siem Reap. Tours market rural villages as unchanging and untouched by modern life:

> *Once we arrive, we enter into a working village where you can meet the local families who still weave baskets, dig wells, and make rice wine all by hand as they have done for centuries.*
>
> [Back to Basics, 2013]

And

> *The Village mostly consists of farmers and while Siem Reap is changing quickly; change here is slow, giving you the opportunity to see life in a typical village. From the grounds of an ancient pagoda to vast rice fields and stilt homes this should not be missed.*
>
> [Beyond, 2013]

Although not a destination for such tours, Khnar did host tourists every day. We therefore turn now to examine how this influenced village livelihoods.

Depending on the season, 500–1000 tourists travel through Khnar village daily to visit the tenth century Banteay Srei temple. About ten percent of these tourists stop in Khnar to visit the land mine museum, which on average receives 55 visitors per day in the offseason and twice that in the high season. The museum was established by a Cambodian man from another district. Formerly employed by a French humanitarian demining company, in 1997 he established a land mine museum in Siem Reap town. However, denied official permissions to continue the enterprise in town, he selected Khnar, which is outside the world heritage site zone (where building regulations are restrictive) to re-establish the museum in 2007 (CLMMRF., 2012).

The museum is flanked by two shops which abut the main road in the village centre. Each is owned by employees or relatives from the museum founder's home district. The museum supports two other humanitarian initiatives; it funds an orphanage, located directly behind the museum in the village but not open to the public, and it co-funds a demining operation (a separate NGO run by the museum founder). The museum staff includes an American couple, tourist visitors who stayed in Cambodia to take up permanent positions as paid volunteers there. The husband, interviewed at the museum, clearly contributed considerable entrepreneurial flair and administrative experience to the enterprise.

Meanwhile, a Cambodian who lived in France for many years purchased land and established an organic farm in the village. He divides his time between the farm and his organic restaurant in Siem Reap town. He takes tourists to the farm to learn traditional Cambodian cooking, and has plans to develop it as a resort with boating canal and accommodation for international students. He also intends establishing a tourism information centre that will link tourists to home-stays in the area. As with the museum, the motivations behind the enterprise are not solely profit-oriented, but humanitarian.

The Cambodian owner of the organic farm and the American volunteer at the land mine museum are cosmopolitan figures. The Cambodian has lived in Paris and travelled in Africa and North America. The American has travelled extensively in Europe and east Asia in his earlier professional career. They arrive in Khnar not only able to understand international tourists, but also able to recruit support from influential national and international people and organisations. They are charismatic figures with stories to tell about relationships established, visitors brought to the village, and obstacles overcome. Meanwhile, the museum founder has acquired an international profile, winning awards travelling internationally and being celebrated in the media (CNN., 2010). Thus, while Khnar has become embedded in international networks, the key actors in these networks were not born and raised in the village, but outsiders with particular experience and talents for operating in such networks.

Meanwhile, local authorities and entrepreneurs native to the village also attempted to take advantage of the opportunities created by the tourist presence. As throughout Cambodia, many villagers sold food, household goods, fuel, and cycle and motorcycle parts from stalls in front of their houses. Some tried selling souvenirs to tourists, but failed with this so returned to selling their usual lines. They compared Khnar with the next village along the road. That village did not have an attraction comparable to the mine museum, but along one side of the road, for a stretch of about 300 meters there were well-stocked souvenir stalls. Some villagers in Khnar argued that because that village had established itself first, it was not possible for Khnar to compete, although others suggested that if the village chief got them organised they might have similar success. Full scale investigation was beyond the scope of the current study but I did conduct some interviews with sellers in the neighbouring village. They confirmed that their village chief had taken the initiative in organising everyone to sell. This had not transformed the village economy; livelihoods overall seemed very similar to those in Khnar. However, the small but significant supplement to household incomes meant that a roadside plot for a stall was worth 10 USD per month in rent.

With this niche in the market taken the local authorities in Khnar looked, unsuccessfully, for alternative strategies. The next administrative level up from the village is the commune, which is governed by an elected council. The commune council chief, an intelligent literate man, explained that he had given the idea of tourist stalls to all of the villages, and that the other village had taken the first initiative because it had a dynamic village chief. He believed it was important that the other villages now identified different strategies, and suggested that they should use traditional activities such as sugar palm wine production and rice farming as tourist attractions. However, nobody had yet worked out how to operationalise this idea.

The village chief, apparently trying to put such ideas into practice, claimed that villagers in Khnar still mill their rice using old mill stones rather than the belt fed milling machines prevalent in the rest of the country. He too spoke of his frustration that other people could make money from tourists but that he did not know how to.

Overall, the villagers native to Khnar, employ a similar portfolio of activities to stave off poverty to those in Doun On and Champey, namely a combination of local activities (mainly firewood and charcoal in Khnar), agricultural day labouring, rice farming, and labour migration to Siem Reap and beyond. At this stage, the main economic benefits of the two tourism related enterprises accrue to the networks of people close to their founders who are not local. Meanwhile, the villagers, acutely aware of their own lack of entrepreneurial skills in the context of tourism, struggle to see how they can profitably engage the tourism market.

Conclusion

This article has investigated the relationships between tourism booms and impoverished rural peripheries by providing a view from three villages in the rural periphery of a major tourist destination in Cambodia. The tourism boom around the temples at Angkor Wat is focused on the provincial town of Siem Reap. The majority of the province's population, however, live in the countryside. This research examined the livelihoods of households in that rural periphery in order to assess the extent to which tourism was important both in current livelihoods and future plans. It found no significant livelihood benefits from either local production for the tourism market or from local enterprises engaging with tourists. It did, however, find a significant minority of households benefiting from labour migration into Siem Reap where most work was indirectly related to tourism, and some was directly in the tourism sector. This concluding section reflects on these findings, discusses their implications for understanding mass tourism's effects on rural peripheries of the global South and suggests some directions for further research.

Tourism and core-periphery dynamics

Livelihoods research promises to decentre thinking which focuses on particular sectors, and open up to the diverse range of contextual factors which shape household situations and decision-making (Scoones, 1998). One strand of tourism literature focuses on major destinations as implicated in core-periphery dynamics (Chaperon & Bramwell, 2013; Weaver, 1998). The developmental potentials of this dynamic lead pro-poor tourism authors to focus on economic linkages, and to ask how the periphery can be linked to the engine of growth at the core. As has been shown, however, this is not the key strategic question that households in the study villages have been addressing themselves to.

Siem Reap province may look like a tourism core with a dependent periphery but in fact, as this study has shown, rural Siem Reap's links to the wider capitalist economy have not been mediated by tourism in particular or by the Siem Reap town economy in general. Rather, the same processes that drove the tourism boom – peace and the opening of the economy – also drove change in the rural landscape. Villagers' livelihood strategies have developed in response to a plethora of local and regional changes and not just to the emergent tourism. Villagers' social capital, and their calculations of risk and reward have been calibrated to a range of potential labour migration opportunities in diverse settings that may compensate for the dwindling opportunities in the local landscape. Tourism-related

opportunities in Siem Reap town are a small but significant element in this broader range of connections.

Globally, poor people are increasingly accessing communication networks that enable identification of opportunities far from home, including across national borders. The presence of a major tourism destination alongside an impoverished rural periphery in a regional economy may lead to an assumption that the former should be central to addressing the latter. However, multiple forms of labour migration and diversified local production constitute a large portfolio of linkages to wider economies. If policy is to build on existing capacities and strategies it should take heed of these existing linkages, and see tourism in this context.

Livelihoods, mobility and tourism

Khnar, unlike the other two villages, presented an interface between villagers and tourists occurring in the village. As such, it created an opportunity to study how villagers could take advantage of business opportunities provided by a tourism presence. Despite their best efforts, local villagers could see no way to take these opportunities; this did not just apply to the poorest, but also to more educated and entrepreneurial households. Removing the distance between the community and the tourists did not change their peripherality.

Some previous studies have shown villager engagement with tourists (conceptualised as bridging social capital) facilitating access to transnational networks and opportunity (Steel, 2012; Zhao, Ritchie, & Echtner, 2011), whilst in Indonesia it has been suggested that a local elite has monopolised benefits from tourism in rural areas (Walpole & Goodwin, 2000). However, in Siem Reap the linguistic and cultural gaps between villagers and tourists appeared too great to bridge even for the local elite, as both of the tourism businesses which emerged were run and staffed by people from outside the villages.

One question raised by this research, is whether the "charismatic cosmopolitan entrepreneur" type found at the heart of both businesses in Khnar might be examples of a wider phenomenon. The tendency for local and non-local entrepreneurs to view rural life differently and for that to shape entrepreneurial engagement has been noted elsewhere (Anderson, 2000). In this study, the 'cosmopolitan entrepreneurs' were not simply educated, urban people. They were charismatic, well-travelled figures who had lived in different continents. In a world characterised by greater mobility (one of these entrepreneurs was a returned migrant, the other an international tourist), it is reasonable to hypothesise that such cosmopolitan entrepreneurs might increasingly be found at the interface with tourists in the rural peripheries of major destinations.

A limitation of this study was that it was carried out in the villages, yet most of the engagements with the tourism economy, both direct and indirect, took place in Siem Reap town. A fuller account would be rendered by examining villagers' experiences in the provincial town. What happens to young women working in tourism restaurants, or young men carving stone souvenirs? Are relationships and networks being established now creating path dependencies for future generations, similar to those established 15 years ago by the car wash entrepreneur from Doun On? The methodological implication is that ethnographies of the tourism-periphery interface should not depend on a researcher who is fixed in the village listening to second-hand accounts of other places. Instead, research strategies need to be adopted that are as multi-local and mobile as the livelihood strategies under study (Marcus, 1995; Rigg, 2013). The interest in mobile subjects which is central to tourism studies is also supremely relevant when seeking to understand the situations of rural people living in tourism peripheries.

Acknowledgements

This research was funded by the Swedish Research Council Formas Grant Number 2011-1315. I would like to acknowledge the contributions of and express my thanks to the following readers: Bertil Vilhelmson, Andrew Byerley, Lotta Frändberg, Shaun Kennedy, Gideon Kunda, Jonas Lindberg and Jane Reas. Thanks also to Ngov Sengkak and Cheap Sam An for smoothing the administrative path to the villages.

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